

and money trying to increase their usage, but quite simply, the bill is a far cry from funding than what I would like it to be. There is a lot of things we should be doing for the promotion of agriculture in the state. This is a little bill that I believe allows Director Frederick to do more on the part of agriculture. I believe strongly that it is a bill that will allow the logical state agency to be dealing with agriculture promotion and with that I won't waste any more time and simply ask for the advancement of the bill.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you. Senator Rod Johnson.

SENATOR R. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members, my recollection of this bill a couple of years ago, or a year ago, was at one time we were sitting around in a strategy session with my staff, at that time included Senator Moore. We were discussing policy and decided that this was an innovative idea for agriculture that should be discussed. We set up a meeting at that time with Director Chuck Schroeder (phonetic) and met with him and then later Director Don Hutchins, and to our surprise, and I think very positive surprise, that he was very supportive of the idea and had been thinking about it for a great deal of time and was wanting to see that the department move away, not necessarily move away, but to at least be given some statutory authority to do more than just the regulatory role that they were serving in because as I see the Department of Ag Director, he or she is not only responsible for the regulation of the industry that comes under the guise of the department, but also as a spokesman for agriculture and the future of agriculture. And it is more than just going out and giving speeches for agriculture, it is actually getting in and rolling up your sleeves and participating in economic development and I recall in a conversation I had with Governor Orr that she envisioned her selection of an ag director as not just being someone from production agriculture, but actually being someone of the character of an economic development type director, but in this case working primarily in the sector of agriculture and that is quite frankly what we need at this time. We also need at this time some entity that would facilitate the input and the questions that Nebraskans have, regards to alternative crops, regards to aquaculture, regards to poultry. There is a great deal of interest in these particular areas. I think that necessity has forced some of us to use innovative ideas. Quite frankly, there is no centralized clearing house of resource that folks can go to, to ask what we can do, where is the expertise in these areas? Where is the necessary funding that we might be